

A Note of Thanks to Elliot Fratkin

Sean Redding

Dr. Elliot Fratkin, who is Gwendolen Carter Professor of African Studies (Anthropology) at Smith College, was also for seven years (from 2010 through 2017) one of the co-editors of the *African Studies Review*. As editor, Elliot brought new perspectives on scholarship of East Africa, on studies of pastoralists, and on excellent and engaged scholarship more generally to the journal. Elliot's teaching at Smith College continues, but the *ASR* would like to celebrate his many contributions as co-editor with the publication of this group of articles on Kenya.

The lives and livelihoods of pastoralists in Kenya have been the major focus of Elliot's research. His first book, *Ariaal Pastoralists of Kenya: Studying Pastoralism, Drought, and Development in Africa's Arid Lands* (2004), examined how the Ariaal adapted to and survived diverse disasters, including drought and famine, local armed conflict, and the intervention of international development and relief organizations. His second book, *Laibon: An Anthropologist's Journey with Samburu Diviners in Kenya* (2012), provided an introspective account of his own experiences doing field research in northern Kenya, and of his gaining a fuller understanding of Ariaal divination and healing rituals. Elliot also was a Fulbright Scholar twice: in 2003 in Eritrea and in 2011–2012 in Ethiopia. Elliot has always combined his love of good scholarship with a strong sense of humor and an abundance of compassion for his colleagues, his students, and his friends.

Over the seven years that Elliot served as co-editor, the *ASR* went through a number of transitions, and through them all Elliot worked tirelessly to shape the journal into one of the leading multi-disciplinary journals of African studies. Elliot strongly encouraged scholars of East Africa to contribute to the journal, and he brought a sharpened awareness of new trends in scholarship to the selection of manuscripts, as well as to the writing of extensive and thoughtful letters to authors to guide them through the revision process. More than his work on the details of editing, though, he also had a

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broader vision for the *ASR* to make it the journal that scholars would think of first when they had a manuscript to submit, or when they wanted to investigate the latest scholarship on a particular issue. Elliot's commitment to strong scholarship has enriched the journal and his ties to researchers throughout the U.S., Africa, and the world have expanded the journal's reach. For all of this, and for so much more, we offer the following articles, with gratitude.

Reflections on Richard Waller

Paul Ocobock, John Lemly

Richard Waller as Mentor, a Reflection by Paul Ocobock

A few years ago, Richard began telling colleagues of his impending "escape" from the confines of university bureaucracy. He refused to call it retirement; research and writing would continue, just with less interruption than before, he stressed. Tom Spear and I planned a series of panels at ASA and ASAUK to celebrate his work (but not "honor"—he didn't like the tone that word implied). It was clear from the overwhelming response to our calls for participants, and then from the outpouring of accolades during the many panels, that Richard has been and will continue to be a path-breaking scholar in African Studies.

Among Richard's most significant contributions to Kenyan studies have been his mentorship and spirit of generosity. Looking back at the development of my first book, some of the most important turning points resulted from conversations with Richard. I remember one occasion, very early in my doctoral research, as I sat with him and Sloan Mahone at the Royal Oak along Woodstock Road in Oxford. I hadn't even taken a sip of my unnaturally warm ale, when he asked me about my dissertation. What followed was a long, bumbling answer about studying young men or youth or age in colonial Kenya, maybe focusing on migrant labor or maybe crime and punishment. The shorter answer should have been: I don't know.

Smiling, Richard looked up from his glass and said that it seemed like I had a lot of different ways to approach the subject, and that maybe I should just pursue them all at once. My book was born right then, nourished along the way by many more of Richard's welcome interventions. And I am not alone; whether through an obscure reference whispered in the Rhodes House Library, a chapter mangled by his red pen, a probing question raised at ASA, or a manuscript reviewed with detail and care, so many of us have enjoyed Richard's mentorship and near encyclopedic knowledge of our archives and disciplines.

His scholarship has been just as influential, and its impact is felt across a broad cross section of disciplines. Richard has researched a myriad of topics: